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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (01/13): "IS A CEASEFIRE CLOSER?
STOP KILLING CHILDREN"

Main Stories:

The "War in Gaza" continues to dominate Palestinian media coverage for the 17th day. Al Hayat Al Jadida leads with news of "difficult" Gaza ceasefire negotiations in Egypt. Al Quds and Al Ayyam lead with, and Al Hayat Al Jadida front pages, reporting of intensive Israeli bombing concentrated near the former Israeli settlement of Netzarim and a "violent showdown" resulting in the failure of Israeli ground troops to advance into Gaza City, despite the support of heavy shelling and bombing from Israeli tanks and Air Force. Al Ayyam adds that Palestinian militants used land mines and projectiles to force Israeli troops to turn back and notes the death of a Saudi national who was fighting on the side of Palestinian militants. Al Ayyam's front page also reports that 11 Israeli reservists have refused to deploy to Gaza for reasons of "conscience." All papers highlight that the number of casualties among women and children continues to rise, with the papers giving January 12 death tolls ranging from 17-33 Palestinian dead.

In photo coverage, Al Quds leads with a photo of Palestinian children sharing a meal of rice and lentils at an UNRWA school in Gaza where they have sought refuge. Al Ayyam runs a lead photo of an "injured woman being carried to Al-Shifa hospital after an Israeli aerial bombardment on residential areas." Finally, Al Hayat Al Jadida introduces front page reporting with a wide lens photo of a Gaza neighborhood filled with the smoke of a recent military strike, above a black font headline that accompanies an oversized photo of Palestinians evacuating their homes, as smoke billows from structures behind them.

In coverage of the humanitarian situation in Gaza, Al Ayyam's front page cites a UN OCHA report stating that many basic commodities are not available in Gaza, where there is no electricity or fuel for a

population of which 56% are children. Al Hayat Al Jadida front pages statements by International Red Cross Director Anton Grand, speaking from Gaza on January 12, stating that the Strip is not safe for civilians. Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page also notes that the EU Presidency has announced readiness to hold a donors' conference for Gaza reconstruction and redeploy its observer mission to the Rafah-Egypt crossing as part of any ceasefire agreement. On an inside page, Al Ayyam reports on assertions by local Palestinian researcher Abdul Nasir Firwanah that Israel has detained a large number of Gazans for use as human shields.

Official Palestinian reaction is highlighted on all front pages: Palestinian Authority(PA)Prime Minister Fayyad is quoted from a January 12 press conference in Ramallah, calling for "partnership" with Hamas within the PA for the purpose of administering the Rafah-Egypt crossing, as opposed to a separate arrangement outside the PA. Fayyad also urged Hamas to accept the Egyptian ceasefire initiative and warned that Hamas would otherwise have to justify its refusal to the Palestinian people, according to coverage. On Hamas statements, Al Quds' and Al Ayyam's front pages run quotes by Hamas leader Haniyah pledging to defeat Israel during a televised speech on January 12, while he also expressing a "willingness" to consider a ceasefire initiative to end "aggression" on Gaza. In official Israeli statements, Al Quds' front page quotes Israeli Premier Olmert speaking in Ashkelon on January 12 about Secretary Rice feeling, "ashamed when President Bush instructed her to abstain from voting for the [UN cease-fire 1860] resolution that she herself had drafted." The paper continues that Olmert claims to have spoken directly to Bush to convince him to instruct Rice to abstain. The paper also quotes anonymous State Department officials refuting

JERUSALEM 00000118 002 OF 002

Olmert's version of events, explaining that Rice had herself decided to abstain from voting and stressing that the Israeli Government does not dictate U.S. policy. In separate statements to Israeli radio on January 12, Olmert reportedly responded to international calls for a ceasefire with the comment that, "Israel does not seek anyone's permission to protect its citizens." Finally, Al Ayyam reports on an inside page that Israel is demanding the establishment of a demilitarized "security zone" in Gaza.

The UN Security Council will hold a session on the situation in Gaza on January 13, according to Al Ayyam's and Al Hayat Al Jadida's front pages. All papers report that Qatar has issued invitations to Arab leaders for a January 16 summit in Qatar to discuss the situation in Gaza.

Jerusalem settlement activities are highlighted in an Al Quds' front page report. The paper notes that the Israeli Jerusalem municipality published on January 7, a decision to "confiscate" a 2.5 acres plot of land in East Jerusalem's Al Tur neighborhood. The paper further reports that the Municipality has turned over ownership of the land to Bayt Orot and another settler group headed by American millionaire Irving Moscovitch. A second front page item reports that the Israeli army has decided to "confiscate" 124 acres of Palestinian land in the Jerusalem area of Abu Dis to advance construction of the Israeli separation barrier around Jerusalem.

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Al Quds editorial is titled, "Is a ceasefire closer?" (01/13): "Some observers expect the war [in Gaza] to stop before President-elect Obama assumes office because they believe that Israel does not want Obama to begin his term against the background of roaring artillery fire, the cries of the tortured, and the sweeping wave of international rallies condemning the massacres and aggression on Gaza. Obama, himself, has expressed interest in the issue, after a long silence. Sources close to his new administration have said that immediately after he assumes office, he will address the situation in Gaza and region issues in general."

2) Mohannad Abdul Hamid opines in Al Ayyam under the title, "Stop killing children" (01/13): "As of the 16th day [since Israeli military operations began in Gaza], 284 children have been taken by the Israeli war machine with hi-tech, or even ultra hi-tech

brutality... 650 [additional] children have been injured, of which 150 critically... the support and justification of this aggression by the American Administration and Congress... creates a culture of hatred and depression and leads to a response of revenge that strengthens the forces of extremism..."

WALLES